

North Summit Church  
**Hebrews 12:1-14**  
March 9, 2026

**Therefore: How Then Shall We Live?**

**Announcements:**

- Connection Card - bulletins
- Women's Tables - Friday, March 20th - 6-8pm
- Church Work Day - Saturday, March 28th - sign up.

**We're continuing our journey through Hebrews: Encountering the Supremacy of Christ.**

Today, Chapter 12 marks a transition into a pointed and encouraging conclusion with a focus on how we should live in light of the reality of who Christ is, what He has accomplished in history, and what this means in our day to day lives.

**Therefore: How then shall we live?**

**READ: Hebrews 12:1-14**

**The "Therefore" Moment**

We live in a moment of extraordinary noise:

- The Epstein files have surfaced confirming what many suspected — that the abuse of children reaches into the highest corridors of power and culture
- A conflict with Iran is unfolding with consequences no one can fully predict.
  - Voices from every eschatological angle are grasping at Biblical texts trying to place it somewhere.
- The sexualization of children and the systematic dismantling of the family continues to accelerate in our institutions, our media, and our schools
  - Even our most loved institutions are falling victim to the rhetoric and celebration of sexual perversion and now instead of just celebrating community we have to gather to highlight one's preferred sexual preference.
- Political chaos, violence, assassinations, economic instability, cultural dissolution
  - Not to mention the constant stream of experts whose only qualification is an internet connection

**And into all of that — the author of Hebrews says: Therefore.**

**Not “therefore panic.” Not “therefore disengage.” Not “therefore build your bunker and wait for rescue.” But therefore — run the race.**

**The great temptation in a moment like ours is one of two errors.**

- **The first is to be consumed by the news**, to make current events the primary lens through which we interpret Scripture, to track every development as if we are responsible for decoding God's prophetic calendar, to let our anxiety about what is coming drive us into spiritual instability and sensationalism.
- **The second error is the opposite**: to check out entirely, to retreat into a private, individualized faith that has no engagement with the world we actually live in.
- **The author of Hebrews refuses both**. He has just given us eleven chapters of theological argument and a gallery of faithful witnesses. And now he says: given all of that — this is how you live.

**In a world of escalating chaos, the call of God on our lives is not speculation or withdrawal — it is faithful, embodied endurance.**

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## **1. Fix Your Eyes on the Right Thing (vv. 1-3)**

### **Hebrews 12:1-2**

**"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."**

#### **The Cloud of Witnesses**

- The author opens with this image of being surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.
- He has just spent all of Chapter 11 introducing us to them: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab, and the unnamed multitude who endured torture, imprisonment, exile, and death.
- These are not cheerleaders in the grandstands watching to see how we perform. They are **witnesses**
  - a word that in Greek carries the weight of legal testimony and, for many of them, martyrdom.
- Their lives are the testimony. Their faithful endurance is the evidence. They are saying to us across the centuries: It is worth it. God is faithful. Keep going.

## Lay Aside Every Weight

- The author does not say every sin only — he says every weight. There is a category here worth paying attention to. A weight is not necessarily sinful. But it is slowing you down.
- In our current cultural moment, one of the greatest weights we carry is the weight of constant information consumption. We are marinating in news cycles, social media feeds, commentary, speculation, and outrage. And very little of it is making us more faithful, more prayerful, more present to the people God has placed in front of us. It is simply making us heavier. More anxious. Less capable of running.
- This isn't a call to ignorance. It is a call to proportionality. The question is: what is the ratio of time you spend consuming the world's analysis of current events versus time you spend in prayer, Scripture, and Christian community? Which voice is actually forming your soul?

## Looking to Jesus

- Here is the corrective — **"looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith."**
- The Greek word translated looking means to fix your gaze on something away from everything else. It implies actively turning your attention from one thing toward another. You cannot look to Jesus and simultaneously have your attention locked on whatever else might be occupying your attention.
  - And when we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, he becomes the filter through which we view everything else.
- And notice the reason the author gives for why Jesus is worthy of this fixed gaze: he himself endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. He did not avoid suffering. He did not escape the worst that a hostile world could throw at him. He endured it, and was vindicated.

## Hebrews 12:3

**"Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted."**

- The antidote to weariness and faintheartedness is not better information about world events. It is sustained consideration of Jesus. The more deeply we know him — his character, his endurance, his victory — the more resources we have to keep running.

- Fixing our eyes on Jesus is not spiritual escapism. It is the only vantage point from which we can see the world clearly and run faithfully through it.
- **[Letters from Iranian Church, and Cuban Church]**

### **A Word About How We Engage Current Events**

- Let me push on something for a moment, because I think it matters greatly for how we live as a congregation in this moment.
- There is a way of engaging current events that makes Christians less faithful and more fearful. You have likely seen it: those who immediately identify every headline with a specific prophetic fulfillment, who map geopolitical events onto biblical prophecies with a confidence the text does not support, and oftentimes undermines the text, and I have watched how this often leaves Christians more anxious about the Antichrist than attentive to the Savior.
- This approach inverts the proper order. Where the news is made to drive the interpretation of Scripture, rather than Scripture forming the lens through which we evaluate the news. The result is Christians tossed about by every development, whose spiritual energy is consumed by speculation rather than by faithfulness.

### **This is not what Hebrews is calling us to.**

- The author of Hebrews was calling his audience and us back to the center.
- Where the primary thing is repentance, the commandments of Christ, and love for God and neighbor. Everything else (including engagement with current events and prophetic reflection) must serve that primary thing, or it becomes a spiritual obstacle. When our attention to the signs of the times exceeds our attention to the condition of our own hearts, and our faithfulness to Christ in our daily lives, we have gotten it backwards.
- The evil we see around us in this cultural moment is real. The things being revealed in our world are a testimony to what the Christian tradition has always taught: that sin in the human heart, left unchecked and given power, produces monstrous results. We shouldn't be surprised by this, we should expect it.
- The sexual exploitation of children, the corruption of elites, the dissolution of family — these are the fruit of a civilization that has suppressed the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1). None of this should surprise us. And none of it is a problem that can be solved through better analysis.

- Our calling in this moment is not to become the world's most insightful commentators on its own collapse. Our calling is to be the kind of people — and the kind of communities — that embody an alternative. To be so genuinely formed by Christ that when the lies run out and people come looking for something solid, they find us.

**The answer isn't having better prophetic timelines, it's living lives surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, lives of embodied faithfulness.**

## **2. Receive What God is Doing in This Moment (vv. 4-11)**

### **Hebrews 12:4-6**

**"In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.'"**

- The author introduces a frame that I think is essential for how we understand this cultural moment: the discipline of God.
- He quotes Proverbs 3:11-12 here to draw his analogy. The painful circumstances these believers are enduring — persecution, social shame, economic hardship — are not evidence that God has abandoned them. **They are evidence that God is treating them as sons.**

### **Hebrews 12:7-8**

**"It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons."**

## **God's Discipline in History**

- I want to suggest that what we see happening in our culture right now can be read, in part, through this same lens.
- When a civilization systematically sexualizes its children, dismantles the family God designed, celebrates what Scripture calls abomination, and concentrates power in the hands of the corrupt — what we see in the slow unraveling of that civilization is not simply social consequence. It is God's fatherly pressure on a creation He has not abandoned.
- Romans 1 describes this pattern: God gives a people up to the consequences of their own rebellion — not as an act of final judgment, but as a redemptive

pressure intended to bring them to their senses. The chaos is real. The suffering is real. But the chaos is not the final word.

- And here is the pastoral implication for us: we do not need to be afraid of what God is doing. A Father who disciplines is a Father who is paying attention. The greater danger is to be left without discipline — to have God simply remove His hand from a people and let them drift unhindered into destruction.

### **Hebrews 12:10-11**

**"For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."**

**Two things are essential here for how we hold this moment:**

- **It is for a short time.** The suffering, the pressure, the difficulty — it is not eternal. It is purposeful and it is bracketed, bounded, and limited.
- **It yields something.** The fruit of righteousness. Shared holiness. These are not incidental by-products. They are the goal. God is producing something in us and through us through this moment.
- The chaos around us is not evidence of God's absence. It is an invitation to the kind of faithfulness that only adversity can produce.
- Discipline is a wake-up call. Meant to produce righteousness.
- **I hold my eschatology with open hands, but I will tell you honestly where I stand:**
  - I believe we are more likely to be saved through the tribulations ahead than from them.
  - If I am wrong, I will receive the rescue with great gratitude.
  - But if I am right, I want us to be a people who are ready
    - not paralyzed by fear, but formed by faith.
    - Not surprised by suffering, but equipped to endure it.
- The witnesses of Chapter 11 were not rescued from suffering. The unnamed multitude were tortured, imprisoned, stoned, sawn in two. And yet the author of Hebrews holds them up not as cautionary tales but as heroes — because they kept running. Because they did not shrink back.

### **3. Strengthen What Is Weak, Walk in What Is Straight (vv. 12-14)**

#### **Hebrews 12:12-13**

**"Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed."**

- This is the most practical and embodied language in the entire passage. Drooping hands. Weak knees. Lame feet.
- The author is not describing spiritual abstractions — he is describing real people who are exhausted, discouraged, barely hanging on.
- **And his instruction is not:** wait for better circumstances.
  - **It is:** strengthen yourself and walk straight.
- The image comes from Isaiah 35:3, where God speaks to a scattered, frightened people: "Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees."
  - **It is a word of mobilization:** not passive endurance but active, deliberate engagement with the life God has called you to.
- **"Make straight paths for your feet"**
  - walk in a way that heals rather than further injures those who are limping alongside you. The witness of your ordered, faithful life is medicine for the people who are watching.

#### **Hebrews 12:14**

**"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."**

- **Two things to pursue:** peace and holiness. Not one or the other. Both.
- **Striving for peace with everyone is not the same as agreeing with everyone or approving of everything.**
  - It means we are not people driven by reactivity, contempt, or tribalism.
  - We pursue reconciliation where possible. We treat even our opponents with dignity.
  - We do not become so captured by the political and cultural battles of this age that we lose the capacity to love the people on the other side.
- **And holiness:** the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.
  - In a culture that has inverted every category of righteousness, our holiness is our most powerful witness.
  - Not our commentary. Not our outrage. Not our analysis. The lived reality of people who have been genuinely transformed by Christ
  - People who are actually different, this is what the world is hungry for, even when it cannot name what it is looking for.
- The most prophetic thing we can do in this cultural moment is live holy, ordered, faithful, love-saturated lives in front of a watching world.

## Application: How Then Shall We Live?

Here is what I believe Hebrews 12 is calling us to in this moment:

### 1. Take Your Prayer Life Seriously

- Not as a ritual. Not as a warm-up for your day. As the primary activity by which you orient yourself toward the God who holds history.
- The most important thing you can do in response to the wickedness you see in the news is to be a person who actually prays
  - who intercedes for the lost, for those in power, for the persecuted, for your neighborhood.
  - Prayer is not the thing you do when you have no other options. It is the first and most powerful response available to you.

### 2. Don't Neglect the Assembly

- We already know this from Hebrews 10:25, but let me press it again in light of this moment: ***"not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."***
- The phrase all the more as you see the Day drawing near. The author does not say: as things get worse, you have permission to withdraw. He says: as things get worse, gather more, not less.
- Isolation is one of the enemy's most effective tools. The drift away from Christ almost always begins with the drift away from the people of Christ. If you find yourself pulling back from this community when life gets hard, that is the warning sign the author has been pointing to since Chapter 3. Come back to the table. Stay in your small group. Let the body of Christ do for you what you cannot do for yourself.

### 3. Invest Relationally — Especially in Your Home

- **Husbands:** lead your households. The family is the first and most fundamental institution, and it is under sustained assault. The response is not to outsource the spiritual formation of your family to the church, to the school, or to the culture.
- The response is to take the responsibility seriously that God has given you. Pray with your wife. Lead your children in the knowledge of Scripture. Create rhythms in your home that orient your family toward Christ.
- **Parents:** the sexualization of children that we are witnessing is not a distant problem for someone else to address. It is happening in the devices in your children's pockets, in the curriculum of their schools, in the entertainment that is normalized for their generation.

- The answer is not primarily political. It is relational. Know your children. Be present. Have the hard conversations. Create a home where Christ is genuinely the center, not a decoration.
- The family that is ordered around Christ — where love is real, where forgiveness is practiced, where Scripture is honored, where prayer is ordinary — is one of the most powerful witnesses available to a culture in the process of destroying itself.

#### 4. Be Ready to Give a Defense for the Hope Within You

##### 1 Peter 3:15

**"but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."**

- The culture is exhausted. The ideologies have failed. The secular project of self-purification through activism and therapy and identity reconstruction has not delivered what it promised. People are hungrier for something real than at almost any point in recent memory.
- They need to encounter people who have genuine hope, not the manufactured optimism of someone who hasn't looked at reality, but the settled, costly, Christ-secured hope of people who have stared into the chaos and found something solid.
- Be that person. Know what you believe and why. Grow in your ability to articulate the gospel, **not as a theological formula but as a lived testimony**. The moment when someone in your workplace, your neighborhood, or your family is ready to ask what you have that they don't — be ready, and pray fervently for the opportunity.

#### 5. Don't Be Taken Out by Anxiety or Fear

- Do not be afraid. Not because the threats aren't real. Not because there isn't legitimate cause for concern about what is coming. But because our God is not surprised by any of it. He was not caught off guard by the widespread corruption of political leaders. He is not wringing His hands by what is happening in the Middle East. His heart breaks over the sexualization of children. His Word has already spoken clearly on every one of these things. And He sent His Son to heal all of this brokenness.
- The cloud of witnesses knew suffering. They ran anyway — “not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar” (Hebrews 11:13). They ran toward a city whose builder is God. So do we.

##### Philippians 4:6-7

**"do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."**

We are not of those who shrink back. We are of those who have faith and receive God's faithful discipline as His kindness leading us to repentance. We are not overcome by fear, but rest in the promise that perfect love casts out all fear. This reminds us that the enemy of love is not hate, it is fear. Hate is the product of fear, and hearts unwilling to surrender to the sovereign hand of God.

### **Conclusion: Come to the Table**

- Hebrews 12 began with a Therefore — a word that ties everything together. Given the supremacy of Christ. Given the priesthood that never ends. Given the blood that purifies conscience. Given the cloud of witnesses who have gone before. Given the discipline that produces righteousness. Therefore — run.
- We are going to close this morning at the Lord's Table. And I want you to understand what we are doing when we come here.
- This table is not a monument to the past. It is a declaration about the present and a promise about the future. Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim: the sacrifice is complete, the High Priest is alive, and He is coming back.
- **We are people who live between two appearances.** Christ appeared once to deal with sin. He will appear again to complete what He has begun. And in the meantime, this is what we do. We gather. We remember. We are strengthened. We go back out.
- This is what Jesus has given us. Not a comprehensive explanation of current events. Not a prophetic timeline that answers every question. But bread and cup, tangible, real, embodied grace for the journey. A reminder that Christ is in our midst. The meal of a people who have not yet arrived but who know where they are going.
- Come to the table with your weak knees and drooping hands.
  - Come to the table with your anxiety about the world.
  - Come to the table and let the one who has gone before you strengthen you to run the race.
- His body was given, once for all. His blood was shed, once for all. The sacrifice is complete. Let us once again say Thank you, to our God who is faithful.

### **Benediction Prayer**

Father, we come to You in a moment that is genuinely difficult. We have seen things in our culture that grieve us. We carry concerns about the world our children are inheriting. We feel the weight of living in a civilization that is unraveling at the seams.

And yet we come to You through a great High Priest who has already endured the worst the world can do and was vindicated. We come sustained by a cloud of witnesses who remind us that God is faithful through every kind of suffering. We come to a table that declares: the sacrifice is complete.

Lift our drooping hands. Strengthen our weak knees. Make straight paths for our feet. Help us to be people of prayer, people of community, people of genuine holiness, a people ready to give a defense for the hope that is in us.

We do not know exactly what is coming. But we know You, and You are enough.

Come, Lord Jesus. We are eagerly waiting. Amen.

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## Small Group Discussion Questions

### 1. Fixing Our Eyes

The sermon drew a contrast between two responses to a turbulent cultural moment: anxious over-engagement with current events (consuming news and speculation as a primary spiritual diet) and faithful under-engagement (withdrawal and apathy). Hebrews 12:2 calls us to fix our eyes on Jesus — which implies actively turning our gaze from something else.

**When I'm troubled by what I see in the news, what does my first move typically look like, and what would it look like to intentionally turn my gaze toward Jesus in those moments? What specifically would I need to reduce in my information diet to make more room for Scripture, prayer, and Christian community?**

### 2. Receiving Discipline

The sermon suggested that what we see in our culture — the unraveling consequences of rejecting God's design — can be understood, at least in part, through the lens of God's fatherly discipline on a civilization He has not abandoned. Hebrews 12:11 tells us that discipline 'yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.'

**How does framing current cultural chaos as God's fatherly discipline (rather than evidence of His absence or defeat) change the way I respond**

**to it? Where in my own life is God currently producing something through difficulty that I might be tempted to simply resent?**

### **3. Straight Paths in Your Actual Life**

Hebrews 12:13 calls us to 'make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.' The sermon applied this to husbands, parents, neighbors, and coworkers — the specific people in front of us. The most prophetic response to cultural collapse is ordered, holy, faithful lives lived in community.

**What does 'making straight paths' look like in the most specific and ordinary areas of my life — my marriage, my parenting, my workplace, my neighborhood? Who is watching my life right now who might be looking for something solid, and am I living in a way that points them toward Christ?**

### **4. Ready to Give a Defense**

1 Peter 3:15 calls us to always be prepared to give a reason for the hope within us, and to do so with gentleness and respect. The sermon suggested that people around us are more desperate for something real than they may appear, and that our testimony of genuine hope is more powerful than our commentary on current events.

**Who in my life is exhausted by what they are seeing in the world and might actually be ready to hear why I still have hope? Am I prepared to articulate what Christ has done for me in a way that connects to their real questions, and what would it look like to have that conversation this week?**